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ABSTRACT

The videotape recording of interactions between teaching interns and young children with special needs provides a significant resource for the interns in assessing their own style of teaching, evaluating personal strengths, and setting their goals. A discussion is presented of the rationale for using videotaping as a tool for self evaluation, and a description is given of the logistics of planning and conducting a taping session. Examples illustrate specific cases in which videotapes were used differently depending on the stage of the individual intern's development and a variety of situations and factors which made each session a highly personal experience. Some patterns emerged in which interns were able to recognize and overcome personal flaws that inhibit effective teaching behavior. Observing their own interactions with students enabled some to change their perceptions of individual children and, in some cases, to identify personal strengths they did not fully realize they had. (JD)

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# VIDEOTAPING AS A SUPERVISON TOOL

by

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Teaching Young Children With Special Needs
Graduate Program
Wheelock College
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This booklet describes videotaping within Wheelock College's "Teaching Young Children With Special Needs" M.S. Ed. program, funded in part by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C. (G007801528).

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TEACHING YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Curriculum 570, Wheelock College Graduate School

This program is designed for persons who wish to pursue an intensive course of study focused on preschool children with moderate to severe special needs (e.g., developmentally disabled, emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, physically handicapped) who are located in integrated and self-contained public and private settings. The program combines the development of theoretical knowledge and skills with practical experience working with children with special needs.

The program's principal elements are:

- A year-long internship with young children in one classroom/center with professional support and supervision. Each student will commit approximately one-half of his or her time to this internship, which provides daily contact with children and involvement in all aspects of their educational planning, including working with the children's parents.
- A multidisciplinary approach to children with special needs through the study of allied disciplines (e.g., pediatrics, speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy, psychology, social work, expressive therapies).
- Training in individualized curriculum development with substantive work in assessment, goal setting, and teaching methods.
- Courses that examine deviations in child development and refine skills in the observation of young children and their environments.
- A choice of electives to build on each student's particular interest or needs.

Student competencies are developed in the roles of evaluator, planner, teacher, and communicator. Graduates of this program are qualified for a variety of positions, including head teacher in a self-contained or mainstreamed preschool program, consulting resource teacher to day care centers, head teacher in a collaborative or clinical setting, and consultant to community preschool or parent-involvement programs. Full-time students begin coursework the last week in June, and can complete the program requirements in two summers and one academic year. Part-time enrollment is also available.

Summer School I

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| Ed. 506 | Observation of Young Children and Their Learning Environments | 3 credits |
| Ed. 540 | Development and Deviations in Early Childhood | 3 credits |

Semester I

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| Ed. 541-542 | Multidisciplinary Approach to Children with Special Needs | 3 credits |
| Ed. 678-679 | Internship in Special Education: Teaching Young Children with Special Needs | 5 credits |
| Ed. 680-681 | Individualized Curriculum Planning for Children With Special Needs | 3 credits |
| Elective | | 3 credits |

Semester II

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| Same as Semester I | 14 credits |

Summer School II

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| Electives | 6 credits |

Recommmended Courses:

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| Ed. 507 | Infant and Toddler Behavior and Development | 3 credits |
| Ed. 524 | Language Acquisition | 3 credits |
| Ed. 530 | The Infant at Risk | 3 credits |
| Ed. 531 | Evaluation of Learning in Young Children | 3 credits |
| Ed. 532 | Group Climate: Positive Approaches to Children's Behavior | 3 credits |
| Ed. 538 | Emotional Disturbances in Young Children | 3 credits |
| Ed. 539 | Learning Disorders in Young Children | 3 credits |
| Ed. 544 | Movement and Thinking | 3 credits |
| Ed. 569 | Working with Parents of Children with Special Needs | 3 credits |
| Ed. 591 | Children Under Stress | 3 credits |
| Ed. 606 | Teaching Young Children with Severe Special Needs | 3 credits |
| Ed. 710 | The Consultation Process | 3 credits |

# USING VIDEOTAPING AS A SUPERVISION TOOL

Videotaping has become an increasingly important resource for interns and their supervisors in the Wheelock College Graduate Program, Teaching Young Children with Special Needs. It was first provided as an option to interns who could choose whether or not to be taped in their classroom once during the year. The experience proved to be so helpful, however, that the interns recommended that taping be required. Currently, it is required twice during the internship year. This has proved to be a significant resource for the interns in understanding their styles, valuing their strengths, and setting their own goals. It has become an important part of the supervision process which interns and supervisors share. This discussion will focus on the rationale for using videotaping as a supervision tool, the components and logistics of the process, and the range and variety of outcomes for the interns.

## What is the Rationale for Videotaping?

An initial orientation meeting is held each fall with the audio-visual consultant providing the videotaping service. With our program staff and the interns, she discusses the rationale for using videotaping. Some of the reasons which consistently emerge from this discussion include:

1. Recording and analyzing children's and adults' behavior in the classroom from a neutral perspective;

2. Demonstrating and recording specific competencies in the classroom (e.g., facilitating a child's expressive language, using one child's appropriate behavior as a model for another child developing that behavior, guiding children through a transition);

3. Examining one's own teaching methods and effectiveness (and affect) in varied formats and activities;

4. Examining the relationship between one's self-concept and teaching performance (and the implications of that relationship for the supervision process);

5. Recognizing one's verbal and non-verbal communications techniques (how do others hear, see, feel my presence and my intentions);

6. Examining one's own style of interaction with individual children, a group, a colleague;

7. Exploring the consistency between one's espoused teaching philosophy and one's actual teaching performance;

8. Identifying one's own strengths and weaknesses in order to develop self-monitoring skills and plan next steps for growth;

9. Documenting one's growth as a teacher;

10. Documenting a program model or a method as a service to a practicum site;

11. Documenting a child's or a group's progress for staff and parents; and

12. Providing children with the opportunity to see themselves as others see them (for therapeutic and/or cognitive purposes).

The Importance of Self-Direction

The prospect of being videotaped is an exciting one, but the anticipation is balanced by initial concern over being exposed or revealed as inadequate. It is hard not to have control of the camera, to have another person recording one's actions and aspect. This initial anxiety is very understandable, but the interns are typically surprised when they see events that felt "out of control" and discover that their own skills and manner were effective. Videotaping can be a liberating experience because the intern is freed from being defined by others' responses and gains real self-knowledge.

In keeping with our program's emphasis on the interns' active role in their own learning, each intern is asked to plan (with his or her supervisor) the major focus for each videotape. They may choose to

have certain activities or transitions videotaped, tutoring one child, leading or team-teaching, etc. Any number of options is possible depending on their individual questions about their own teaching. Giving the interns responsibility for the major focus of the one-hour videotape also gives them some control and helps reduce the initial "butterflies" feeling. The primary goal in the first videotaping is for the interns to feel safe enough to risk exposure, so that the videotape can more accurately record their typical behaviors in the classroom. The videotape is intended to enable the interns to better know themselves as teachers, and they are asked to focus the videotape on activities that will best provide them with the information they need. Thus, the videotape initially meets the needs they define as most essential.

How is Videotaping Planned and Conducted?

Videotaping involves a number of logistical details. Permission must be granted by the parents of all the children to be included. If parents choose not to give permission, then the site staff needs to plan ways to ensure that the child's rights are protected. Our program provides a set of release forms to each site in September which specify the reasons for the videotaping and the limited nature of the use. Videotapes are to be viewed only by the intern and his or her supervisor, and are to be erased at the end of the year. Most parents are glad to sign the release. The site keeps the releases (to protect confidentiality) and sends a sign-off form to our program coordinator indicating that all permissions have been granted and videotaping can occur.

Occasionally a session is videotaped that has value beyond supervision, perhaps for informing or training parents or teachers. In such cases parents

are asked to give permission a second time for that specific, additional use, and if all parents grant that permission, the tape is kept permanently. (This is a later procedure).

The next step is scheduling. The first videotape is done in October or November, the second in April or May. The consultant provides all the necessary recording equipment, except for the videotapes which our program owns and re-uses. (Half-inch reel-to-reel black and white videotapes which run one hour per reel are used.) The intern is responsible for making an appointment with our consultant and planning with her what focus the tape will have, which children will be included, etc. At many sites it has been found helpful to have an additional person in charge of the microphone. Good sound quality is extremely necessary to the value of the videotape, and a separate, hand-held (not by the intern!) microphone has been invaluable. Our consultant arrives early enough to set up the equipment and orient herself. Her function as on-the-spot editor is critical. She becomes the intern's "eyes" by choosing what behaviors to follow, when to shift to another event, when to focus on an activity no adult is even aware of at the time, etc. She herself is an expressive therapist who uses videotaping as therapeutic resource. Her sensitive perspective and her concern for and knowledge of children are essential to the value of the videotaped record. It is a demanding role requiring much more than technical expertise. We have been fortunate in finding an audio-visual consultant with such a sound understanding of children and teachers.

In order to familiarize the children with the recording process, they were allowed to explore the equipment and see the consequences of their actions on the monitor as they were recorded. This was found to be too distracting for some groups, however. The current procedure is to turn the

monitor on only at the end of the session so that the children can share in the experience without taking over the videotape which is really for the intern. This is one time when adult needs come first, though the temptation to use the videotape primarily for therapeutic or cognitive reasons for a particular child (That's me! I can do it!") is indeed present. Giving all the time to the children may be a way to avoid the risks of being exposed, also.

When the videotape is completed, the intern schedules a viewing with his or her supervisor at Wheelock. The essential here is an ample block of time (2-2½ hours) to view, discuss, and re-view the one-hour tape in an extended supervision conference format, and of course, a private room at the Audio-Visual Center for the viewing conference. This is an invaluable supervision session and takes the place of the regular on-site observation visits and conferences.

How Does Self-Reflection Develop from Videotaping?

The results for each intern are personal and individual. Interns' responses to their videotapes reflect the stage they are at in conceptualizing their roles as teachers, their feelings about their work, their level of communication with colleagues and their ability to monitor and analyze their own actions. The interns learn to reflect upon and analyze their own behaviors in a more active, self-directed, and responsible way by sharing the process with their supervisor. Using a videotape record enables this to happen because both supervisor and intern can view the same events, share and compare their observations, and even replay sections to compare previous perceptions with current ones. A remarkable kind of "knowing" develops from the opportunity to actively question actions and expectations in the light of their documented consequences.

Of course this questioning occurs on several different levels depending on the intern's experience and capacity for reflection, but the videotaping process enables it to happen. Several patterns emerge:

1. Avoidance of risk

An intern at an early stage in his or her ability to reflect may be anxious and defensive without realizing it. One student focused the whole videotape on individual teaching interactions or on open-ended interactions with one or two children. There was a marked absence of himself in a directing or leading role for the whole group. This intern saw himself as an experienced teacher, yet he seemed to avoid risking himself in situations which involved planning for and conducting group activities. His previous experience had been in a highly individualized, one-to-one teaching format. He was eager, he thought, to learn new skills regarding group dynamics and management. Yet he had managed to avoid the possible failures ahead by avoiding any responsibility for group activities. He was unaware of this pattern, but with the videotape as a sample, he and his supervisor could discuss the need for taking new roles and the difficulties involved in risking one's essential sense of competence. He was able to take more initiative in leading group activities from that point on, because he had recognized his avoidance and the reasons for it.

One of the tenets of our program is that one must take risks with support in order to gain the experiences to reflect upon and to learn from. This is easy to talk about but often difficult to do, especially when becoming a student again after several years of teaching and being the expert. The first videotape can be especially valuable in enabling intern and supervisor to share and discuss feelings about this process.

It is easier when evidence of competence and effective strategies is right there, present for both intern and supervisor to view together. Then they can productively focus on fears of inadequacy, on one's self-concept versus others' perceptions, and on the need to take risks in order to grow. Interns who make use of the videotape in this way, to reflect on their basic sense of competence and comfort in their own efforts, are at an early stage but are developing an essential ability to know and rely on their own feelings about their actions. Once interns understand their own needs and responses in this respect, they are more able to formulate questions to guide observation that benefits the children. Perhaps it is in this way that the videotape most effectively liberates interns.

2. Negative perceptions

Another common pattern is using the videotape record to recognize that self-monitoring is inaccurate or an over-reaction to stress. Typical of the change based on actually seeing evidence of one's own competence, is the experience of a second intern who worked with a group of children with behavior disorders. Her classroom always felt "chaotic." She was never sure whether her efforts helped or hindered. So much seemed to be happening that she always felt events were on the edge of disaster. She tended to expect the worst and found it difficult to respond to the moments of appropriate behavior. She reduced her level of activity, becoming so hesistant to take initiative with children that situations that could have been helped to develop into positive interactions and success deteriorated because the intern didn't seem to care or invest herself.

The first videotape was critical for this intern because it showed

this pattern while, at the same time, showing moments in which she was effective in spite of her own negative expectations. For instance, the intern was in charge of helping one child put his building away at clean-up time. The child avoided the task by hiding behind the block shelves. Then, when she repeated the direction and began dismantling his building, he returned and angrily shoved the blocks on the shelf as she handed them to him, protesting, "Hey, she's putting my building away!" When the task was completed, both intern and child separated without comment.

The intern was amazed at viewing this incident on tape. She recalled it as completely different. "He never does anything I say! He didn't help put the blocks away!" The tape was re-played and the intern discovered the degree to which her negative, fearful expectations affected her perceptions of events. This was a major revelation for her, that she could be so caught in her own expectations that she would completely misperceive children's actions, even in such an apparently clear-cut sequence as this one. The consequence of her mis-perception was also obvious to her. "Why, he did it and I didn't even praise him. No wonder he acts bad to get attention. He has to!" She could see the event objectively on tape and learn from it; and more importantly, she could see the degree to which she was effective in a moment she remembered as out of control. She was excited to see how the child responded to her direction, and that her strategy of moving ahead to support and or challenge him by starting to dismantle the building herself was truly effective in gaining his participation. Now she could see his angry shoving of the blocks as a face-saving device on his part, rather than as a resistance.

This videotape conference was a turning point for her in her teaching. She became much more active in the classroom, both in

participating with the children in their play, and in making effective use of herself as an agent to encourage and then reward appropriate behaviors. At her next supervision conference she was excited by the degree to which her perception of herself and events in the classroom had changed, and by the extent to which her new self-concept and confidence in her effectiveness enabled her to see and act in more productive ways.

3. Changed performance due to changed perceptions

This same intern's second videotape, done six months later, documented changes in her teaching style due to her new ability to accurately monitor events and reflect on her actions. Where she had seemed constrained and hesitant in the first videotape she now moved freely, spoke with enthusiasm, and conveyed clear, responsive reactions to children with her voice, facial expressions and body language. She could risk more on her second videotape, too. She planned the videotaping so that a range of activities, each with herself as the leader or director, was recorded. One segment, showing her method for leading a circle activity so that each child successfully participated in a cooperative group drama, was of such value for training that permissions were secured so that it could be kept permanently.

4. Reflection and responsible self-assertion

A third intern had had increasing difficulty working with her cooperating teacher. She kept resolving to communicate her distress and then avoiding it, and felt increasingly inadequate and depressed as a result. The November videotape brought this situation into focus for her as a primary block to her ability to utilize the internship experience.

The intern had planned to tape her interactions with one child with whom she had been following an innovative strategy for two weeks. As it happened, on the day of the taping her cooperating teacher asked her not to work with that child because a consultant wanted to observe his behavior when left on his own. The intern accepted this change to her plans but her real feelings were visible on the videotape in her sad expression and passive, removed manner during the first activity. Later, however, her manner changed markedly when she became involved in playing with a group of children in the block corner. The children played with enthusiasm and much disorder, requiring the intern to take an active, responsive role. One child needed emotional support, another limits, a third ideas and materials. The intern became animated and active, showing the children a wide range of responses. They were increasingly appropriate and organized in their behavior and a rich, warm interactive process developed. The difference between the intern's effective, responsive manner during this activity compared with her earlier flat and isolated manner was striking on the videotape.

When viewing the contrast with her supervisor, the intern was surprised to see how much her external behavior and effectiveness were affected by her inner feelings. She could recall how she felt during each activity; angry and unsure during the first one because she couldn't work with the child she had planned to work with, and absorbed and happy during the block play. With the visual record to reflect on, the intern talked about her problems communicating her ideas and needs to her cooperating teacher. She could identify a pattern in which she frequently yielded, felt depressed and isolated,

and then avoided any confrontation or discusssion with her cooperating teacher about the problem. Now, in seeing the degree to which her anger was affecting her teaching, and with the evidence of her excellent ability to interact effectively, she could start to take responsibility for her needs and feelings in the classroom. She could value herself more highly because she could objectively observe the eagerness and satisfaction with which the children responded to her during the block play, and that improved self-concept enabled her to feel stong enough to become her own advocate. The self-knowledge she gained from analyzing and discussing her own feelings and behavior on the videotape enabled her to dare to confront her cooperating teacher about her needs and frustrations. This was very difficult, and the process continued over some months, but the intern became increasingly able to assert herself and be responsible for her own internship experiences. The videotape which at first had seemed a disappointment, because it didn't show her work with a particular child, actually served to enable her to reflect on and analyze the major block to the success of her internship. Once she began that process, triggered by the videotape and conference, her experiences and her feelings about herself as a student teacher acting on behalf of her own growth, changed in significant and positive ways.

5. Recognizing constraints on perception

In-service interns, who have long-established working relationships at their sites, often make use of the tape on a higher level. For instance, one student who was also the head teacher in her classroom, formulated specific questions about her work with one child, that child's interactions with adults and peers,

the relationship between aggressive behavior and degree of adult attention for that child, etc. She then pre-planned with our audio-visual consultant which activities could be videotaped so that her questions about her teaching and the variables affecting the behavior of the child she found so difficult could be answered. Her thoughtful, planned approach resulted in a rich videotaped record, and the conference with her supervisor fit the ideal model where both intern and supervisor mutually share, analyze, and suggest solutions to documented problems. As this very experienced intern watched her interactions with the aggressive child she found herself with new, productive questions. Instead of asking, "Why is she so aggressive?" or "What can I do to change her behavior?" the intern noted that the child never smiled or showed pleasure, and asked, "Why doesn't she show any positive affect?" This question was much more productive in understanding the degree to which this child was isolated and overwhelmed and thus apt to hit out at others. The intern's previous perceptions had been so structured by her definition of the child as aggressive that she hadn't been able to go beyond that label to observe or explore why. Armed with her new understanding, and her awareness of the extent to which her perceptions could limit her ability to see and respond, she changed her strategy and the child's aggressive behaviors decreased dramatically. The child's happiness and pleasure increased, too, as did the teachers's sense of her own effectiveness.

This experienced teacher was able to perceive accurately and reflect on her own reactions and behaviors in the classroom. She had a well-developed ability to monitor herself accurately and assert her ideas. However, she wasn't aware of the ways in which

our use of labels and categories can restict and narrow our perceptions (as well as order and organize them). With this new awareness she was able to develop a more open, less constrained approach to observation and reflection.

These examples show how videotapes are utilized differently depending on the stage at which the intern is in his or her own development, and the variety of situations and factors which make each placement a highly individual experience. A common result emerges, however. As the interns view their behavior on videotape and compare their actions with what they thought had happened, or what they had intended to have happen,they discover discrepancies or new information that they did not expect. Often they discover what had been present all the time but was unrecognized or avoided, and the videotape conference enables them to take a major step toward removing an obstacle to their development as more effective teachers. It is striking to see how frequently some constraint on an intern's teaching is recognized and dealt with because of the videotape conference.

A major element in the effectiveness of this supervision tool is its mutual nature. The intern and supervisor share the same observations in a way which leads to real problem solving. The supervisor doesn't tell the intern what he or she must change or impose perceptions and goals on the intern. Instead, by commenting on and questioning events that both of them observe on the videotape, the supervisor enables the intern to identify and analyze significant elements. The Teaching of Young Children with Special Needs graduate program stresses the need for interns to take the initiative in

defining their own goals and the experiences they need to reach those goals. Interns are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning. The ability to identify, reflect upon, and analyze one's own feelings and behavior in the classroom — and to plan and act on the basis of that self-knowledge — is probably the most valuable asset our interns take into their future work with children.